

socialist standard

May 2015
Vol. 111 No. 1329
£1.50

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



Blood Kin

The State and the Mafia



Margaret
Hodge
page 9



Marketing
housing
page 16



Incanomics
page 17

socialist standard

MAY 2015
contents

FEATURES

What's wrong with profit?	10
Eco-capitalism is impossible	12
Italy and its criminal state	13
The market didn't always exist	17

REGULARS

Pathfinders	4
Halo Halo!	6
Cooking the Books	7
Material World	8
Greasy Pole	9
Cooking the Books	18
Mixed Media	19
Reviews	20
Proper Gander	21
Meetings	22
50 Years Ago	23
Action Replay	23
Voice from the Back	24
Free Lunch	24

All original material is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-ND 2.0 UK) licence.

The Socialist Party

52 Clapham High Street,
London SW4 7UN

Tel: 0207 622 3811

Email: spgb@worldsocialism.org

Website: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb

Blog: <http://socialismoryourmoneyback.blogspot.com/>

SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

should be sent to the address above.

RATES: One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 6 June** at the address above. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

Contact Details

SPGB Media: spgb.media@worldsocialism.org

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

North London branch. Meets 3rd Thursday 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX

Contact: chris.dufton@talktalk.net or 020 7609 0983

South London branch. Meets 1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Tel: 020 8740 6677. Email: tenner@abelgratis.com

MIDLANDS

West Midlands Regional branch. Meets last Sunday of the month, 3.00pm, the Briar Rose pub, 25 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RE. (Check before attending). E-Mail: vincent.otter@globalnet.co.uk. Tel: 01242 675357

NORTHEAST

Northeast branch. Contact: Vin Maratty, 22 Greystoke Avenue, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR2 9DS, tel: 01915 250 002. Email: vinmaratty@googlemail.com.

NORTHWEST

Lancaster branch. Meets fortnightly 8.30pm. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: 01524 382380 Email: spgb.lancaster@worldsocialism.org

Manchester branch. Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. Tel: 0161 860 7189

Bolton. Tel: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589

Cumbria. Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

Carlisle. Robert Whitfield. Email: robdotbob@gmail.com Tel: 07906 373975

Rochdale. Tel: R. Chadwick. 01706 522365

South East Manchester. Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

YORKSHIRE

Yorkshire Regional Branch: Edward Craggs, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, Yorkshire, YO51 9ER. Tel: 01423 332781

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex Regional branch. Meets second Sunday every month at 2.00pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ.

Email: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org Tel: 07973 142701.

South West Regional branch. Meets 2nd Saturday of each month in the Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2.00pm (check before attending). Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 9511199

Canterbury. Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

Luton. Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

Redruth. Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB.

Tel: 01209 219293

EAST ANGLIA

East Anglian Regional branch. Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details).

Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. n.deutz@btinternet.com

David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF.

Tel: 01692 582533.

Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: 01603 814343.

Cambridge. Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS.

Tel: 07890343044

IRELAND

Cork: Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods,

Frankfield, Cork. Tel: 021 4896427. Email: mariekev@eircom.net

Newtownabbey: Nigel McCullough. Tel: 028 90852062.

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Thur. 7.00-9.00pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995.

JIMMY@jimmy29.freemove.co.uk Branch website:

<http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. Tel: 01355 903105. Email: peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace Dundee, DD4 9NA, Tel 01382 698297

Kilmarnock. Meets last Thursday of month 7pm-9pm at the Wheatsheaf pub (about 2 minutes from bus station). Paul Edwards. Tel: 01563 541138. Email: rainbow3@btopenworld.com

Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Wednesday of each month 7.30-9.00pm. Tel: F.Anderson 07724 082753.

WALES

Swansea branch. Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres:

Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB.

Tel: 01792 643624

Cardiff and District. Corres: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. Tel: 02920-615826 Email: botterillr@gmail.com

Llandudno

Contact: Gareth Whitley - Email: gwhitley@hotmail.co.uk

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

Latin America. J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

AFRICA

Kenya. Patrick Ndege, PO Box 78105, Nairobi.

Swaziland. Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini.

Zambia. Kephas Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

ASIA

Japan. Michael. Email: japan.wsm@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Trevor Clarke, wspa.info@yahoo.com.au

EUROPE

Denmark. Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J

Germany. Norbert.

E-mail: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Robert Stafford.

Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

Italy. Gian Maria Freddi, Via Felice Casorati n. 6A, 37131 Verona

Spain. Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200 Manzanares.

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada. Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8 Canada.

Email: SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (India) 257 Baghajatin 'E' Block (East), Kolkata - 700086, Tel: 033-2425-0208, Email: wspindia@hotmail.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand) P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

World Socialist Party of the United States P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA.

Email: boston@wspus.org

Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity

to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join The Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our

ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.



socialist standard

MAY 2015

Editorial

Coalition politics

THE LIB Dems have come up with a seemingly perfect alibi for the notorious betrayal of their promise to abolish the tuition fees that the previous Labour government had imposed: that they were in a coalition government and this meant that they had to give up some of their promised policies in order to reach an accommodation with their partners in government.

Now that coalition governments seem to be the order of the day this is a get-out-of-jail card that all parties can play. And seemed to have been preparing to do so. At least this is what was suggested by the increasing extravagance of their promises as the election campaign went on. They seemed to know they would have a ready-made excuse for not honouring them.

Using the need to compromise with coalition partners as an alibi, however, is not one that will hold up. Most election promises cannot be honoured even if there is a single party government with a decent majority. That's because they are promises to make capitalism work in a way that it simply cannot be made to.

An adequately funded NHS and affordable housing are examples. Such reforms cost money, money that can only come in the end, in however roundabout a way, from profits. But profits are the life-blood of the capitalist economic system. Which is why they have to be given priority over meeting people's needs adequately. And why governments always end up according this priority, despite what they may have

promised.

The only way a government could, for instance, get more affordable houses built (apart, that is, by giving people more money to spend, but nobody would believe any party that promised that) would be to subsidise this. Houses are built by profit-seeking companies and these are not going to invest in building houses to sell to people who cannot afford to buy them. Left to themselves, they invest in building houses for people who can afford them; these days, upmarket houses and flats for the better-off, whether bought to live in, rent out or leave empty as a speculative financial asset.

The money to subsidise affordable housing – or an adequate health service or reducing inequality or eliminating child poverty or any of the other laudable promises we heard – would have to come either out of taxation, which will ultimately fall on profits, or from borrowing from the rich, which will incur legally-binding interest charges which will have to be paid out of taxation.

Any government which reduced take-home profits in this way to promote a better life for people would provoke an economic slowdown. Which would create other problems for people. It's a lose-lose situation but one that is built-in to capitalism.

Coalition politics won't end this. All it will do is provide parties with another specious excuse for not honouring promises which can't be honoured anyway. Just wait and see.

Immaculate Conceptions

WHAT'S BEEN happening lately with the people from Occupy, UK Uncut and the rest of the rebellious 'noughties' crowd? Whatever activity there is has sunk below the media horizon and therefore dropped off the political agenda, while the restless radical pool continues to evolve into new forms and outgrowths, clustering, merging and diffusing in ways that seem more organic than organised. The big splashes in the morning papers have given way to a grey drizzly afternoon of self-doubt, boredom and endless questions.

What is one to do with a world 'absolutely in thrall to capitalism', where most radical groups 'coalesce around a hollow capitalist meliorism' or else focus on the bogus rhetoric of having no leaders at the expense of any real strategy, democratic oversight or ability to adapt to changing circumstances?

Thus speaks Novara Media, an 'outgrowth' of this very milieu and a sort of alternative online news service cum political analysis show aimed at the young radical, non-state anticapitalist sector. Its founders are a likeable and highly articulate pair of young postgrads/postdocs by the name of Aaron Bastani and James Butler, and five minutes of their quickfire patter is enough to make your head spin.

What does Bastani say about non-state communist strategy in the 21st century? That the 20th century of mass one-way communication was the great outlier and that today's pathways of communication through disparate and affinity-based back-channels is more akin to the 18th century. What does Butler say about the activist's disavowal of theory? He explains that doers are always suspicious of thinkers: 'there's a history of people thinking that thinking means that one should be in charge of things and lead things, and movements led by thinkers and intellectuals is [sic] always a bad thing and tends to lead to paranoia and narcissism and overidentification'. They observe that protest should be offensive not defensive because defensive strategies become conservative and 'fail to stake a claim on the future', and they make clear that 'people argue about political power needing to be purified, but it doesn't, it needs to be overthrown'. Butler adds poignantly 'we have been losing for so long that we've forgotten to ask how do we win, and what would winning look like?'

Well, what would winning look like for Novara Media? It would look like something called fully automated luxury communism (FALC). The argument is simple enough. Machines are taking all the jobs, so the future should be one of luxury and leisure. People have said this before but Messrs B&B don't make the elementary mistake of thinking that this will happen without a revolution to overthrow the powerful elites. What's appealing about their argument is that it emphasises what you can have tomorrow rather than what you have to put up with today. Communism for them is a glittering prize and an orgy of abundance, not an exercise in hair-shirt asceticism.

Do they mean non-state communism the same way we do? Oddly, Bastani mentions a 'living wage', which doesn't fit the picture. Wages and money presuppose property relations and markets, which inevitably give rise to states. Leaving that to one side, are they anyway overegging the pudding? When talking about post-scarcity socialism we tend to talk about sufficiencies, not luxury. We do sometimes speculate about shortages in the short term as farmers switch from cash crops to subsistence, the 'bottom billion' are prioritised for food and healthcare, and the world productive system learns to readjust. Is it realistic and in fact responsible to promise luxury as standard?

As is common with future-gazers, Novara may have been seduced by their own vision. One only has to recall the utopian predictions of early advocates of nuclear power to remember

that technology is always rosier at dawn.

When considering anything to do with automation, indeed any machinery, one shouldn't ignore that unwritten rule of the universe, Sod's Law. If it can go wrong, it probably will, and just when you least expect it.

People who can only afford to drive old cars will have noticed that the more sophisticated the technology, the more unfixable and often disastrous it is when it ages and breaks down. It may be that the rate of development of complex systems always outstrips our ability to diagnose failures within those systems or, in the vernacular, we're too clever for our own good. Why might this be so? Because as you add new features, sensors, cruise controllers, drop-down displays and so forth in *arithmetical* fashion into a closed network, the number of potential failures and multiple-node failures tends to increase in *geometrical* fashion.

In the immaculate conceptions of the futuretopians, nothing ever goes wrong and everything always works at its optimum. If you ask what happens when the system breaks you get the response given out about the Titanic and Chernobyl: 'Don't worry, we've got a system to cover that'. There is just now a debate in airline circles about whether to develop fully-automated planes without pilots, controlled just by their on-board computers. This is how capitalism drives technology - the purpose is simply that the airlines would save a pilot's wage. Would socialists be interested in this too? Opponents will point out that a driverless car which fails can just stop, whereas a driverless plane that fails has no good outcome.

How much complexity is too much? What is so endearing about clunky, old-fashioned, non-electronic cars is that there's not so much to go wrong, and not much you couldn't fix yourself given a shed, a few tools and a basic grounding in car maintenance. Socialism would have production plants and factories for the sake of economy of scale, but not to the exclusion of local, small-scale production and maintenance.

Socialist production, being non-market and not for profit, would work quite differently from the capitalist market process. If you're giving up your time to build a bus, a power station or a piano, you don't want to have to put in further work repairing it, nor create work for others by making it difficult to repair. You would use standardised and recyclable parts which could be swapped out easily. You would not bother adding features which looked impressive but didn't do anything. You would only use quality components, not cheap ones intended to fail. And you'd keep it simple. But simple doesn't have to mean plain, or plain ugly. Taking a cue from William Morris we could stipulate that beautiful things should be useful, and useful things should be beautiful.

Fully automated luxury communism is a vision based on two assumptions, that people want luxury and that they hate work. We suggest that neither of these is correct. Sufficiency is sufficient for security, and security is what people really want, not to live like Roman emperors, even if today capitalism makes people fantasise about getting stuff for the sake of having stuff. Second, there is the obvious fact that labour, even quite hard manual labour, can be a huge pleasure when freely and cooperatively engaged in. If that were not so there would be no art, no hobbies, and no sport. Full automation, where machines do everything, is probably more a fantasy of capitalism's stressed-out wage-slaves than a healthy aspiration of free people. And let's remember to ask, what if it breaks down?

Novara is keen to stress that their ideas are negotiable and do not come fully formed and fixed. It is a fact to gladden the hearts of socialists that people like Butler and Bastani are out there keeping revolutionary ideas alive and fresh, but when concocting revolutionary recipes we would always counsel a pinch of salt.

PJS



A better world for everyone

TO AIM for a better world, we first have to explain how our present society is arranged. For the last few hundred years, society has been divided into just two main groups, or classes. There's the overwhelming majority of us – possibly up to 95 percent – who don't own much in the big scheme of things and can only get what we can afford through our wages, savings or state subsidies. If we're able to find employment, we get our money by selling our time and our abilities to companies and organisations. These same companies and organisations then sell the services we run and the products we make back to us. But collectively, we don't get back all that we put in. It's a lop-sided arrangement in favour of the corporations and land owned by a tiny minority of people, around 5 percent. Owning the means of production allows them to cream off a profit or a surplus for themselves, and they do this by exploiting the rest of us. Their economic power is backed up by political power. The state is there to try and manage the status quo, and protect the interests of those with all the wealth. This doesn't mean that they have control

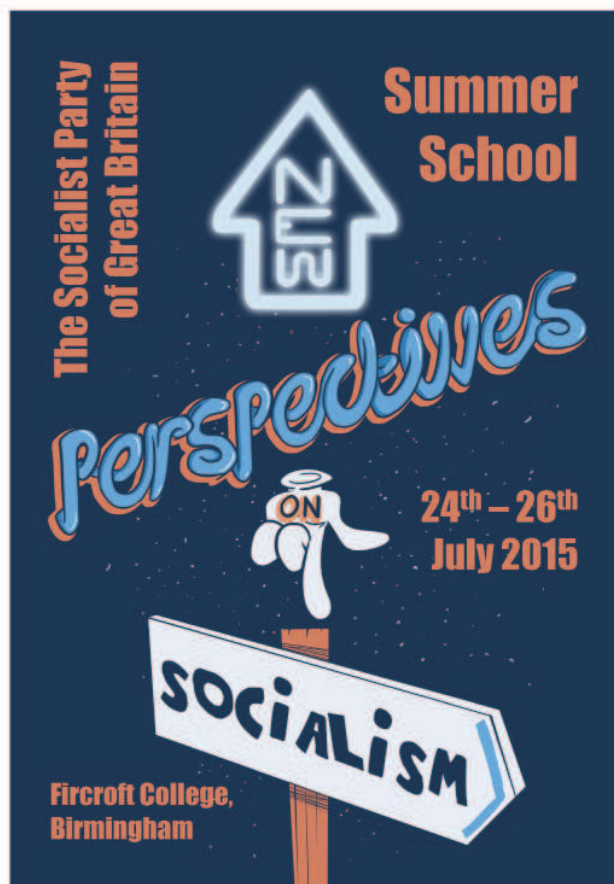
over the economy, though. Market forces fluctuate between growth and slump regardless of what politicians and corporate strategists want. Instead, they're more likely to be playing catch-up and trying to keep things financially viable in a shaky economy. It's like being on a fishing boat on a choppy sea, struggling to stay afloat while the boat's owner relaxes on a desert island.

This arrangement leads to massive inequalities in wealth. Goods and services only go to those who can afford them, not necessarily to those who need them. Those who can't afford the basics risk falling into a lifestyle of poverty it's hard to escape from. Living in an unequal world where everything is rationed creates divisions between us, leading to prejudice and discrimination. Even if we've got a reasonable standard of living we never have enough real involvement or sense of ownership in where we work and live. We often feel powerless to influence what really matters to us. We end up stuck in unfulfilling jobs, stressed about whether we can afford to pay the bills, or frustrated by our lack of independence.

Other political parties support the basic way society is structured, or just assume it's the only way things can be. They would say that it can be improved from within, by changes to the law, or finding more funding for public services. Reforms or increased public spending may help some people in the short-term. But they only last as long as they fit in with the economic and political climate, which runs in the interests of the elite. The needs and wishes of the vast majority of people aren't as important.

People have campaigned for higher wages, or increased funding, or protecting the environment, without long-lasting, satisfactory resolutions ever being found. This shows that the problems haven't been addressed at their cause.

We would say that to solve society's problems, we have to change the way society is structured. This means going from our world where the means to produce and distribute wealth are owned by a minority, to one where those resources and facilities are owned by everyone in common. Then, goods would be produced **continued on page 22**



The principles of revolutionary socialism were formed over a hundred years ago. Then, capitalist growth was being fuelled by the technological and logistical developments following the Industrial Revolution. Since then, the history of capitalism has been marked by economic peaks and troughs, two World Wars, the rise and fall of state capitalism, massive advances in science, and widespread shifts in culture and beliefs. The Socialist Party of Great Britain argues that its original principles are still valid despite all these changes. This is because the basic structure of capitalism persists, regardless of differences in the way it is organised.

But is this right? Has society changed so much that class structure and the role of the state are significantly different now compared to previous centuries? What effects have these changes had on class consciousness and the likelihood of revolution? And how should revolutionary socialists respond through their theory and activity? It's always healthy to re-examine our beliefs, to see if they still apply to our ever-changing world. This weekend of talks and discussion will be an opportunity to take a fresh look at several important aspects of the socialist viewpoint.

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £80. The concessionary rate is £40. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance.

To book a place, send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, York, YO51 9ER, or book online through the QR code or at <http://spgb.net/summerschool2015>. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk



Cake, Flowers, Pizza and Jesus

IT'S NOT often the Halo-Halo column takes an interest in the plight of the religiously bewildered in a legal argument, but a few recent court cases, one in Ireland and two in the US, show just how absurd things can get when religion, politics, the legal system and gay rights get tangled together.

In one case a couple of evangelical Christian bakery owners in Belfast were asked to bake a gay-themed cake last year in honour of Andrew Muir – Northern Ireland's first openly gay mayor. The cake was to be decorated with Sesame Street characters Bert and Ernie, and to have the message 'Support Gay Marriage' highlighted in icing.

Asher's Baking Company, however, which is apparently named after one of the 12 sons of the biblical patriarch Jacob, refused to bake the cake as the request was 'at odds with what the bible teaches', and they were backed in their refusal by the Democratic Unionist Party, including first minister Peter Robinson.

What the bible actually teaches about cake is unclear – there's a well-known bit about loaves and fishes, but cake hardly gets a mention. However, as far as gays are concerned the message is obviously not 'let them eat it'.

A complaint of discrimination regarding the bakers was then lodged with Northern Ireland's Equality Commission, and a case

at Northern Ireland's high court followed which at the time of writing, is still in progress. And Asher's, the bakers, are now 'a global cause for Evangelical Christians across the world' according to the *Guardian* (30 March). Wouldn't it have been easier just to find another bloody baker?

Meanwhile in the U.S. a Washington florist decided that providing flowers for the wedding of a same-sex couple also went against her Southern Baptist faith. In this case, too, the couple, and the Washington state Attorney General sued her, resulting in her being fined \$1,000 and the couple seeking damages and legal fees. However, in this case, the florist has so far raked in over \$85,000 from supporters in a crowdfunding campaign.

An Indiana pizza shop, too, Memories Pizza, which, it seems, was forced to close down after coming to the conclusion that pizza should not be served at gay weddings has also netted over \$800,000 from supporters.

There must be a lesson there somewhere.

NW



SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

WORTH
£9.95

FREE

SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

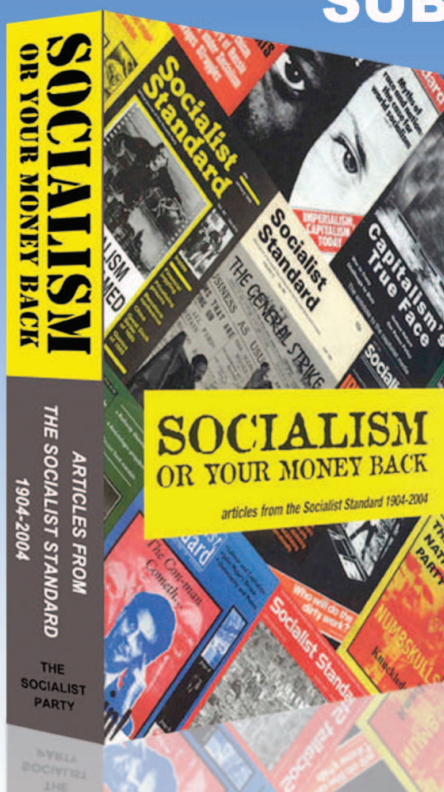
Articles from the *Socialist Standard* 1904 - 2004. A running commentary of 100 years of capitalist history by a socialist journal.

Two World Wars The Russian Revolution The Rise of Hitler
The Spanish Civil War Hiroshima The Silicon Chip Pop Music
...and much more

WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO
the **socialist standard**

This collection will revive a jaundiced spirit... Every home should have one.

THE INDEPENDENT





An ambitious politician promises

CHUKA UMUNNA, Labour's Shadow Business Secretary, is being touted as among those who may succeed Miliband as Leader if Labour lose the election. It could therefore be revealing to look at what empty promises he is making in his bid for re-election in Streatham in London.

One 'Re-elect Chuka Umunna' leaflet states (the obvious): 'Too many people don't earn enough money.' So what is he going to do about it? Make employers pay higher wages all round? He's not that much of a demagogue, if only because no-one would believe a Labour government could deliver it. Instead, what he promises is:

'Labour believes that helping people get higher paying work is the right thing to do ... Labour will support areas of the economy like low-carbon and creative industries which can support new high paying jobs ... Labour believes that the least everyone deserves is a wage they can live off, and a Labour government will help more people get higher paying jobs.'

This is carefully crafted to suggest one thing while meaning another (note the repetition of the term 'higher paying'). The suggestion is that a Labour government will help workers earn more money. However, this won't be for the job they are now doing. It would only be for workers who moved to work in some other sector of the economy said to be able to 'support high paying jobs.' Two sectors in particular are mentioned – low-carbon and 'creative'. Umunna doesn't spell out how or why these industries would be able to offer higher-paid jobs than other industries nor how a Labour government would 'support' them, though probably there's a Labour Party policy paper somewhere, full of provisos and let-out clauses, explaining this.

'Creative' is generally used to refer to specialised legal and commercial services that are sold to overseas clients (and which are not really 'creative' at all since they don't actually create any new wealth, just make a profit from capturing a share of wealth already created in some other part of the world). As to 'low-carbon industries', it is hard to see how they could be made profitable without government help, whether tax breaks or direct subsidies, i. e., by being subsidised from the profits of other sectors of the economy.

Wanting to earn more money is a perfectly legitimate aspiration for workers under capitalism, but they would be better advised to pursue this through their own trade union action than relying on the promises of ambitious politicians.

Elsewhere, Umunna makes a really wild promise:

'I want a Labour government so we can fix the root causes of the problems people come to me at my surgeries for help with. I believe we can tackle the massive problems that exist with the cost of housing and childcare, with our transport system, and with low pay and insecure work.'

Fix the root causes? Really? Since these 'massive problems' have a single root cause in capitalism, with its minority ownership and production for profit, a Labour government is going to do nothing of the sort. They would just tinker around without being able to tackle them. If re-elected he and the other MPs will find people continuing to come to their surgeries for help with the same problems as before since their root cause – capitalism – will not have been fixed. To really solve them capitalism will have to be ended but Umunna accepts capitalism and is on record as standing only for a 'better capitalism' (www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/06/chuka-umunnas-speech-better-capitalism-full-text).

PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM

PAMPHLETS

Price and Qty

An Inconvenient Question: Socialism and The Environment.....	£2.00	x
What's Wrong With Using Parliament?.....	£1.00	x
Ecology and Socialism.....	£1.00	x
From Capitalism to Socialism: how we live and how we could live....	£1.00	x
Africa: A Marxian Analysis.....	£1.50	x
Socialism As a Practical Alternative.....	£1.00	x
Some Aspects of Marxian Economics.....	£2.00	x
How the Gods Were Made.....	£1.50	x
Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek.....	£1.50	x
How we Live and How we Might Live by William Morris.....	£1.50	x
The Right to be Lazy and other articles by Paul Lafargue.....	£2.00	x
Marxism Revisited.....	£2.00	x
Socialist Principles Explained.....	£2.00	x
All the above pamphlets (25% discount).....	£15.00	x

BOOKS

Strange Meeting: Socialism and World War One.....	£4.50	x
A Socialist Life by Heather Ball.....	£3.75	x
Are We Prisoners Of Our Genes?.....	£4.75	x
Socialism Or Your Money Back (reduced from £9.95).....	£4.00	x
All the above books and pamphlets (25% discount).....	£20.00	x

DVD

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff.....	£5.75	x
Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up.....	£5.75	x

TOTAL£

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, FREEPOST, London, SW4 7BR, United Kingdom.

(No postage necessary if mailed within the UK)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

City.....

Postcode.....

County.....

PHONE (optional).....

E-MAIL (optional).....

Water scarcity is becoming a *reality*



CALIFORNIA'S ECONOMY surpasses Russia's. This year California has implemented mandatory water restrictions to reduce water usage by 25 percent. Governor Jerry Brown explained, 'People should realise we're in a new era. The idea of your nice little green grass getting lots of water every day - that's going to be a thing of the past... This historic drought demands unprecedented action... It's a different world. We have to act differently.' This comes as the Sierra Nevada snowpack, which is critical to the state's water system, is providing less. Water that falls during the wet season is stored and released during the summer. 11 trillion gallons of water are needed for California to recover from the emergency.

Water has long been a precious resource in California and is central to the state's economy. It is a symbol of how capitalism tries to tame nature. There are golf courses in the deserts of Palm Springs, lush gardens and lawns in Los Angeles. Swimming pools have been part of California's lifestyle for decades. There are approximately 1.18 million residential swimming pools in California, according to a study. The typical residential pool requires from 10,000 to 30,000 gallons of water to fill.

But it is agriculture which is at the heart of California's worsening water crisis, consuming 80 percent of California's water. Agriculture thrives while everyone else is parched. California produces roughly half of all the fruits, nuts, and vegetables consumed in the United States—and more than 90 percent of the almonds, tomatoes, strawberries, broccoli and other specialty crops—while also exporting vast amounts. Most crops and livestock are produced in the Central Valley, which is technically a desert. The soil is very fertile but crops there can thrive only if massive amounts of irrigation water are applied. Agriculture's share of state water use is seldom mentioned. Instead, news concentrates on the drought's implications for people in cities and suburbs. Last year, the legislature passed and Governor Brown signed a bill to regulate groundwater extraction. But agricultural interests lobbied hard against it resulting in a leisurely implementation timetable. Although communities must complete plans for sustainable water management by 2020, not until 2040 must sustainability actually be achieved. The Central Valley could be a dust bowl by then.

To plant increasing amounts of water-intensive crops in a desert would be questionable in the best of times. To continue doing so in the middle of a historic drought, even as scientists warn that climate change will increase the frequency and

severity of future droughts, seems ludicrous. But pistachios generated an average net return of \$3,519 per acre in 2014. Almonds, an even thirstier crop, averaged \$1,431 per acre. 'I've been smiling all the way to the bank' said pistachio farmer John Dean. All across the world drought is increasingly prevalent, deserts are expanding and ground-water drying up.

In Arabia ground water levels are falling dangerously. The United Arab Emirates crown prince Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan admitted: 'For us, water is [now] more important than oil.' At their current rate, the UAE will deplete its natural freshwater resources in about fifty years.

In the Brazilian city of São Paulo, home to 20 million people, and once known as the City of Drizzle, the Alto Tietê reservoir network, which supplies three million people in greater São Paulo, has water levels at below 15 percent. The Cantareira reservoir system, which serves more than nine million people in the state, is only 5 percent full. Calculations indicate that given the current level of consumption versus the predicted raining patterns there is only enough water in the system to last four to six months. That means the water could run out before the next rainy season starts in November. State officials recently announced a potential rationing program of five days without water and two days with, in case the February and March rains do not refill the reservoirs.

Since the mid-1990s, south-east Australia has experienced a 15 percent drop in rainfall during late autumn and early winter, with a 25 percent slump in average rainfall in April and May. A drought has gripped western Queensland and northern New South Wales since 2012.

The total amount of fresh water on Earth comes to about 10.6m cubic km. Combined into a single droplet, this would produce a sphere with a diameter of about 272 km. However, 99 percent of that sphere would be made up of groundwater, much of which is not accessible. By contrast, the total volume from lakes and rivers, humanity's main source of fresh water, produces a sphere that is a mere 56 km in diameter. That little droplet sustains most of the people on Earth.

Capitalism encourages over-consumption and wasteful production for 'endless' growth and greater profit. People have changed economic systems before when they no longer suited new conditions. Things are only impossible until they're not. We can't stay stuck in the past, unable to imagine a better future that holds us back from creating a better world.

ALJO



Public Accounts Hodge Podge

IF ANYONE had any doubts about the purpose and activities of those luminous, towering buildings in what was once London Docklands they can refer to the most assertive of them, announcing itself in enormous letters on high, as HSBC. This is the successor to what was named the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, founded in 1865 to spread out until it achieved its place as the second biggest bank in the world, reminding us of the power of the class who own it and fashion all its operations. But now the bank is under pressure to justify its record in matters such as the failure to pay legal taxes, the rewards to its upper management and a pervading policy of corruption. All of which has attracted the attention of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) where they are assumed to be certain of their sources of information and of their intention to use what they know. Such as was ruthlessly imposed by its recent Chairman Margaret Hodge MP (pictured) for Barking – who insists that she is not to be known as Chair.

Exasperated

HSBC was among the victims of the PAC, under suspicion of colluding in tax avoidance at their Swiss Branch, leading to the withdrawal of blocks of cash amassed through such activities as dealing in drugs, armaments and all that entailed. Shortly before grilling some of the bank's top executives Hodge had set the scene by informing another witness who exasperated her with his evasions that '...honestly, I want to put a bomb under you guys'. So the prospects were not promising for HSBC's Non-Executive Director Rona Fairhead, who assured the Committee that it did not follow from her salary of £513,000 a year that she would be expected to be aware of the tax offences, even though they were estimated to have reached some £135 million in the UK '...I can assure you we had no evidence of tax evasion'. But Hodge was unimpressed: 'I think you knew. Either you colluded in tax evasion or you didn't know. In that case you are either incredibly naïve or totally incompetent'. And then, in relation to one of Fairhead's other lucrative responsibilities '...you should think about resigning and if not, I think the government should sack you'.

Loony

Who is this fearless, feisty champion of truth and probity in public office? Hodge is a multi-millionaire who was brought to England as a child when her family left Egypt to escape the anti-Semitism arising from the 1948 Egypt/Israeli War. Settled in London, they grew massively rich on the proceeds of their family-owned steel processing and trading company which now has a turnover reckoned in billions, and of which she is still a shareholder. After university Hodge worked in Market Research and in 1973 she was elected as a local councillor in the London Borough of Islington. She rose to Chair of the Housing Committee, something of a hot seat in a borough notorious

for its housing problems. But she was well-connected; her Vice Chairman was Jack Straw and a neighbour was Tony Blair, whose wife Cherie was employed in the legal firm of Hodge's husband. At that time the Social Democratic Party was growing, causing large scale desertions among Islington's Labour Party – an opportunity for Hodge to take over as Leader of the Council. Islington was reputed to be a hot-bed of 'loony lefties' where they attempted to conceal attention from the chaos on the ground by flying a red flag from the roof of the Town Hall.

Abuse

Hodge stepped down from the Council in October 1992. The more suspicious observers may have regarded this as an example of shrewd timing because it happened when a massive scandal about sexual abuse of children in Islington council care was about to be exposed. In 1985 Demetrious Panton had written to the council to complain about his treatment when he was in their care during the 1970s and the 1980s. The doubts and anxieties about this were aggravated by the council's failure to reply to Panton until 1989, and then to inform him that while regretting his experience they did not admit to any fault on their part. But the matter did not die away because at that time Senior Social Worker Liz Davies and her manager were facing a succession of severely damaged youngsters who, apart from other problems such as homelessness and involvement in petty survival crime, were saying that they were regularly abused in private or council homes. 'It was like a queue' was how Davies described what she found at her office each morning; 'There is a lot that I just can't speak about'. Apparently, Hodge would not hear social workers' pleas for additional resources: 'She only cared about the budget'. Then some crucial publicity was threatened in October 1992 from the *Evening Standard* publishing the first of a series of reports on the abuse at the care homes, which Hodge chose to describe as 'a sensationalist piece of gutter journalism'.

Apology

It was shortly after this that she left the council and, after a by-election in 1994, entered the House of Commons to support Tony Blair's campaign for the Labour leadership. Her reward came in 2003 when she was appointed as Minister for Children. This was too much of a shock for even the most ardent of Blairites as it aroused the still festering anger about what had happened, and what had allegedly been suppressed, in Islington. For one thing an independent report by the Director of Oxford Social Services in 1995 had largely found that the original complaints had been valid and described the affairs of Islington council as 'disastrous'. But Hodge fought back, writing to the chairman of the BBC in an attempt to stop a Radio Four programme about the abuses which she described as 'deplorable sensationalism' and to inform him that Panton was 'an extremely disturbed person'. In all this she was going too far; she offered to apologise to Panton but he refused this as inadequate so that in the end she had to make a public apology in the High Court and to pay him £30,000. So it could be said that at least the Panton episode had reached some kind of conclusion 25 years after it had begun. And in June 2010 Hodge was made Chair of the PAC, in which job she has impressed a clutch of Members too easily blinded by her energetic concealment of cruel facts under her fog of self-promotion.

IVAN

What's wrong

with profit?

Think of a company that produces goods or provides some service or sells things.

The company needs to make a profit, and to do this it has to deliver what people want and what they can afford. If it does not provide what people want, it will simply not make a profit – or at least not make enough profit – and will go out of business. So it has to produce, provide or sell what people want. This implies keeping up with changes in taste and technical developments and what its competitors are up to, as the company's sales will decline if others can provide better or cheaper goods and services. The owners of the company will be motivated to improve its products and innovate new products and methods of production, thus the profit system stimulates technological progress. So production for profit keeps everyone on their toes and ensures that companies deliver what their customers want.

That, in a nutshell, is the kind of argument that is used in defence of production for profit and so of the capitalist system as a whole. But Socialists reject such arguments, so let's look at what production for the sake of profit really implies.

For starters, companies do not simply provide what customers want: they have to provide what customers can afford to buy and what will make the company a profit. There is no point in supplying goods that are of excellent quality if they are too expensive for most prospective customers. So companies will often be forced to cut corners in various ways such as using cheaper ingredients and cheaper machinery and speeding up the production process. This may result in lower prices or just higher profits. For instance, water

can be injected into chicken to increase the weight of portions; and a well-known recent example of adulteration was the use of horsemeat rather than beef in ready meals. What is produced may be less safe than it could and should be, and the health and safety of workers may not be properly taken into account, all because this is the way to reduce costs and increase profits. In 2013–14, 133 workers were killed at work in the UK, and 629,000 workplace injuries occurred.

But at the same time as companies seek to provide what customers can afford, they also attempt to get them to buy more expensive items. This method, known as upselling, may involve such tactics as selling extended warranties, suggesting a slightly dearer version of some item or simply adding fries to a fast-food order. It all adds to the profit of the seller or provider.

Moreover, advertising is intended not just to inform customers of new products but to stimulate demand and persuade people to buy. Wants, then, are not natural things but are often artificial, created for the sake of profit. Demand for the latest gizmo may be on the basis, not of 'this is what you wanted all along', but of 'this is what you need now, and you're missing out if you don't have one'. Peer pressure, particularly among children and teenagers, can be a powerful means of getting people to 'want' things and so of

increasing the profits of the company that can 'satisfy' them.

Does profit-based production really lead to technological progress? It was recently revealed that drug companies are scaling back their efforts to develop a cure for dementia, on the grounds that they have already devoted considerable resources to this end. In some cases they have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on searching for effective drugs, only to see potential treatments fail and so not produce any profits. In this and similar cases, then, the profit motive acts as a barrier to research and innovation. And this is not for the sake of some new smartphone app or new line in fashion: this is the search for a



“Wants, then, are not natural things but are often artificial, created for the sake of profit”

cure for a dreadful disease which already affects 850,000 people in the UK alone, a number expected to increase. So the argument that the profit motive promotes innovative products is not always true, as it only does so as long as there is a reasonable expectation of profit in the short to medium term.

The aim of capitalist production, remember, is to make a profit, and making particular goods or providing a particular service is just a means to this end. Ford do not make cars, they make profits; Apple do not make phones and computers, they make profits; McDonalds do not make burgers, they make profits; Tesco do not sell food and so on, they make profits.

If companies really exist to make widgets or whatever, why do they ever make workers redundant or go on short-time working? Why do they not continually expand their operations in order to output more and more widgets, by taking on more staff or buying new equipment or extending their working hours? From a capitalist point of view, these are rather silly questions, as the answer is obvious. It's because they are constrained by the need to make a profit. Producing more and more of some good or service is useless if there is little or no prospect of selling these, or selling them at a profit. Redundancies are made because business is not going well and costs need to be cut in order to restore profits. Anything else would be the path to commercial suicide, however useful what was produced might be.

The housing market is a particularly clear case in point. There are plenty of people living in poor-standard accommodation, living with their parents, stuck in homeless hostels and so on. At the same time there are many unemployed building workers and abandoned building sites. If house-building companies truly existed to build houses, workers currently unemployed would be working to



Above: assembly line workers producing more in value than they receive in wages and so creating profit. But not everything is governed by profit, as this parade of voluntary workers, below, demonstrates.



build the houses that are so badly needed. But it doesn't happen, simply because there is no profit in building houses and flats for those who cannot afford to buy them. Government schemes to make home loans easier and so help people onto the 'housing ladder' do not alter this essential point. In fact they represent an acknowledgement that there is a gross mismatch between what could be supplied and the effective demand for homes – effective demand, not just demand, since what matters is what people can afford, not what they badly need.

We have not mentioned the fact that profits are made by exploiting a company's workers, who produce more in value than they receive in wages. This is yet another reason, in addition to those reviewed above, for getting rid of production for profit and replacing it with a system based on production for use, one designed to meet people's needs and wants.

PAUL BENNETT

eco-capitalism

...is impossible

On 9 March the Socialist Party and Green Party candidates for Swansea West, Brian Johnson and Ashley Wakeling, met in debate. Here is an extract from what our candidate said.

The Greens' arguments and their policies are based on the assumption that under capitalism political parties in government can do what they like, and make a positive difference for the whole of society. The motivation is good, but unfortunately, the assumption is false. Capitalism is not open to manipulation so that it benefits the majority; it's a system that is very tightly structured to benefit only the wealthy few.

Put simply, support for the Greens means not only ignoring market forces but also ignoring an obvious contradiction in their argument. The contradiction is this: with market forces essentially causing and creating a sick society how can you realistically expect those self-same forces to solve it by proposing a form of eco-capitalism?

However, the Greens have chosen to ignore this and continually assert that they can make the market system a nicer kind of capitalism. But capitalism will still be capitalism, with no fundamental change in how we live and how we could live as it will be business as usual.

We'll still be faced with the same contradiction of poverty amongst plenty, the same issues and problems related to war, the same lame excuses that are offered that the system itself is fine; it's just those greedy bankers, or the immigrants, or dictators, or tax dodgers taking advantage of tax havens; or those who insist on playing by their own rules instead of fulfilling international agreements and obligations, etc.

Capitalism is a class-divided society driven by the imperative for those who own and control the means of wealth production to make a profit. It can only function as a profit system in the interest of those who live off profits. To advocate transforming the capitalist economy on the basis of offering a reformist strategy so that 'it works for the common good' which the Green

Party suggests is precisely what cannot be done. It's going to take a revolution to do that.

Socialists are much more aware of what members of the working class are up against and have no intention of misleading them by suggesting that capitalism can be controlled or that a string of green reforms will be of lasting benefit.

Socialism has been possible for a very long time; the main thing holding it back has been those who have thought, after all the accumulated experience, that something could be done to improve capitalism.

Capitalism is the cause of a range of environmental issues the world is facing, but can a socialist alternative resolve these issues? Crucially, would a socialist alternative have to curtail growth or could it administer an environmentally sustainable version of growth?

Marx considered that plenty was a necessary condition for the coming of a fully developed socialist society. Whilst many argue that removing want will require growth, most Greens argue that any growth is unsustainable.

Socialists put the argument round the other way: that it is impossible to tackle environmental problems without effective global planning and cooperation, a prerequisite for which is eliminating the conflicts that result from scarcity. Socialist contend that the growth needed to remove scarcity can be green, but only if organised in the context of a democratically planned socialist economy. One where production and distribution is based on human need and not markets and profits, where buying and selling is abolished and with them consumerism and all its associated waste, where any economic growth can be constantly assessed for the impact it will have on

nature and society.

Socialists further argue that not only is pollution and environmental destruction caused by the profit system but also that it is the science of ecology that explains the processes by which pollution and environmental destruction resulted from releasing waste substances into the rest of nature at a rate and in amounts that it cannot cope with; that science and technology, far from causing the problem, provide the knowledge and techniques that can be used to solve it given the right social and economic framework; and, last but not least, that this framework is a less centralised society that produces to meet human needs not for profit, which could only be done in a stateless, moneyless, communist society.



Italy and its criminal state

In the run-up to the 2015

Universal Exhibition that opens in Milan this month, the mainstream media carefully revived the image of the old mafia boss, Toto' Riina, dispensing death sentences from his prison cell. This concealed the real criminal power of the Calabrian mafia, *Ndrangheta*, which has deep roots in the Italian political machinery both local and central.

During the scandal about Expo 2015 politicians of the left and right have been convicted of collusion with the mafia. They had been buying votes and doing 'favours' to secure the juicy Expo 2015 public contracts. The Calabrese mafia has huge amounts of capital to re-invest. According to a convicted Lombard entrepreneur:

'If the mafia sees something that works, they invest in it, no bullshit, maybe they also do other stuff, sure! I know that! However, if it's a serious business, the Mafioso sees it just like me, in the same way. He has the means to invest and he doesn't need to go crying for money to the Bank, because he invests his own money' (Monzin from 'Ndrangheta in Lombardia: in manette politico Pd, infiltrazioni in Expo, Il Fatto quotidiano, by A. Bartolini and D. Milosa | 28 October 2014).

The mafia has the cash and has infiltrated the State machinery. No wonder that Italy is a country where its President has recently testified about the so-called State-mafia negotiation of the 1990s.

What is the mafia?

How did the Italian ruling class get so entangled with organized crime? Moreover, what is the mafia in the first place?

The mafia is not a cool young Robert De Niro gaining respect in his block among southern Italian immigrants in New York at the end of the 19th century. Even Bill Bonanno, son of legendary American mafia boss Joseph, who had every reason to cultivate a myth of his world, said that 'The Godfather' film

gave a romantic image of the mafia. This image, though, still influences the behaviour of some young 'Goodfellas'. The mafia is much more complex than a strong Italian accent, a big ring and a bulldog face.

A good overview in English of why organized crime was and is so nested into the Italian political and social structure, and why the mafia system has become so successful globally is given by John Dickie in his *Mafia Republic*. For those who read Italian

Salvatore Lupo's *Storia della Mafia* is definitely a must.

Nowadays, *mafia* is a general term used to identify a secret organization which operates according to its own set of rules that are outside the legal order of the bourgeois State. The means that the mafia makes use of are: violence (retaliation), intimidation, extortion, corruption, collusion of bourgeois institutions. Violence is usually the prerogative of the bourgeois State, but the mafia not only uses it, but counts on it to obtain silence from its own victims (*omerta*). This silence is not a cultural tradition, as is often believed.

The mafia had its origin in a bargain

struck with the Bourbon rulers of southern Italy and Sicily who were too weak to maintain internal as well as foreign order, combined with the weakening of the aristocratic class. During the occupations of the Italian peninsula, first by Republican and later Napoleonic France, the Bourbons did not mind using outlaws or brigands (*briganti*) to

Camorra

Sacra Corona Unita

'Ndrangheta

Cosa Nostra

organize resistance. The Bourbons also made use of field wardens (*campieri*) as rural police (*Compagnia d'Armi*) to control public order, often giving weapons and power to common criminals. These emerging henchmen, either rural, in Sicily, or urban, in Naples, kept the Bourbons' hated enemy, the liberal bourgeoisie, underdeveloped. Times were changing fast and the old regime had to keep up. Whereas in England Cromwell's revolution had prepared both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie to cope with the emerging capitalist system, the old French, Spanish, Austrian and Neapolitan regimes were either crumbling or struggling.



Memorial Square in Palermo - dedicated to Giovanni Falcone and other judges assassinated by the mafia

The second even greater bargain that the southern Italian mafia entered into came with the Piedmontese occupation of the South of Italy (an occupation also called the Unification of Italy) after 1860. The political role that the occupying power gave to these secret groups during the Unification was vital. It set them up in the post-Unification capitalist era. A clear example of this can be found in how Garibaldi's regime in Naples, represented by Don Liborio Romano, police prefect of the city, administered public order, nominating as City Guard the Onorata Società della Camorra, namely the head of a band made up of little tyrants, loan sharks and racketeers. As Alexander Dumas wrote at the time, 'Camorra's power is the only real power Naples obeys'.

Not the same today

However, it would be a mistake to think that mafias, in Sicily called *Cosa Nostra* and in Naples called *Camorra*, were what they are today. Lupo captures this very well: the mafia

'determines... internal hierarchies, independent from the general ones of the economy and politics, but throughout the entire first part of its history it remains a minor power compared with the power of major landowners and notables... the mafia during the liberal era or during the first republican period did not think at all to determine the content of the laws, leaving this type of problem... to major notables' judgment or... to local lobbies' judgment. Then, things changed... big landownership disappeared as a political and social entity... the notable gave way to the party machine... mafia affiliates... had much more freedom to interfere with politics itself, because politics redistributes the growing flow of resources it manages, by doing so

paralyzing the administrative, public security and juridical apparatuses of the State'.

The third basis of the mafia was its discovery of America, and in particular, the Prohibition years. As a result of the colonial policy of the Piedmontese in the South of Italy, to which should be added the natural impoverishment caused by capitalism (described by Marx for England and Ireland in *Capital*), a huge mass of peasants who could not find jobs in the very few local industries, such as the salt and sulphur mines, nor in the northern industries, had to look for fortune overseas, mostly in America.

During the USA prohibition years, Italy was ruled by the fascist regime. The main reason why fascism reached power in 1922 was to stop workers and peasants causing trouble, which had characterized the years after the end of WWI. During WWI, in 1917, a self-proclaimed workers' revolution succeeded in Russia and in 1919, for a few months in Germany and Hungary. Worker and peasant protests were widespread over the whole Italian peninsula. There were occupations of factories, such as Fiat in Turin, and of land, and mutinies of army regiments in Trieste and Ancona. The ruling class (upper bourgeoisie, landowners and industrialists) felt the need to suppress such movements. Thus, the violent acts of fascist squads against the workers and peasants were tolerated, and often welcomed, by the national and local authorities.

These fascist squads' actions occurred mainly in the north and centre of Italy. In the South, and in Sicily in particular, the repression of workers and peasants was carried out by the local mafias. However, when the fascist regime won executive power it engaged in a campaign to destroy the mafias. There

is general agreement today that only the lower layers of the mafias were touched by this. This was because the top layer was in bed with the political elite and so untouchable. In any event, many mafia affiliates moved to the USA, where business was good. Prohibition laws became the best business opportunity ever for the American mafia. It gave the American mafia led by families of Sicilian origin the chance to become the first organized crime network in the USA and to make a huge amount of money.

The Allies' invasion of Sicily and the consequent second post-war period meant a real triumph for organized crime in the South of Italy. As Lupo points out, it is plausible that the Sicilian mafia organized itself at the end of the fascist era round the American model of Luciano, Coppola and Genovese, who had been expelled from the USA. Lupo thinks that without this American component the Sicilian mafia would have died out. But once more, the mafias in Italy acquired a political function.

At the end of WWII fascism had formally collapsed, while the Russian bloc had not. Worker and peasant conditions were the same as, if not worse than, before the war. There was a real risk that workers would again organize the same movements suppressed by the fascists between the two wars, and bring the country to the other side of the Iron Curtain. The risk was so stark that the US intelligence service was actively organizing prevention plans (e.g. a coup d'état).

It should not surprise anyone that there was a link between freemasonry, politicians, upper class members and mafia bosses. In the South, it was common for the Allied forces to put 'men of honour' in charge of local municipalities. Moreover, the suppression of those backing peasant struggle was carried out by the local mafias. In Sicily, the mafia killed 4 leftwing activists in 1945, 6 in 1946, 8 in 1947, not including the 11 victims of the Portella della Ginestra massacre. The number of killings to suppress the peasant turmoil decreased only when in the 1950s agrarian reform brought about the systematic dismantling of the peasant cooperatives. Even so, it would be a mistake to think that at this stage the mafia had a political plan. Its aim was just to gain full control over its territory.

Business enterprises

The post-war reconstruction period (Marshall plan) was a key moment in the history of mafias in Italy. The mafia 'does not make distinctions between sectors: agriculture, construction, commercial. What is important for the mafia is its monopoly on certain activities, first of all control, it is important that this is reserved to the gang (clan)' (Salvatore

Lupo, Storia della Mafia). During this period, the mafias went through changes. They become less and less linked to the rural heritage and more and more to the entrepreneurial spirit, following the American model. Where the large landed estate system (*latifundium*) was dying, the mafia transformed itself, taking possession of public funding for reconstruction. Although this was a parasitic entrepreneurial system, entrepreneurship became a mafia speciality. This is the time of *il sacco di Palermo* (sack of Palermo), where ugly buildings would appear anywhere like mushrooms. The now republican State did not oppose this criminal entity, but actually became a tool of development for the mafia phenomenon. This is captured by Paolo Borsellino's statement:

'Mafia and politics are two powers, which rely on the control of the same territory: either they fight each other or they reach an agreement. The ground on which they can reach an agreement is the division of public money, the illegal profit on the public works'.

Christian Democracy (Democrazia Cristiana, DC) represented the ideal political party with whom to share reconstruction money. The DC-mafia machine was just perfect. It was based on the old clientelism and patronage. This machine formed in a few years a huge inflated service sector, while industrial development remained paralyzed because of the mafia regime. This was a colluded Keynesianism, where public money went to *Cosa Nostra* and *Cosa Nostra* ensured DC political domination. Now 'the mafia associate does not camouflage himself as entrepreneur: he is an actual entrepreneur, who makes use of the additional advantage of being part of *Cosa Nostra*' (Giovanni Falcone e Marcelle Padovani, *Cose di Cosa Nostra*).

Beside the big public funds business, in that period the business of the century -- drug trafficking -- grew. Sicily became a central hub for the refining and

distribution of drugs. This was because of their preferential channels of distribution with the American families (clans) of Sicilian origin. This huge amount of money soon needed to find laundering outlets. It was no coincidence that during this period, the '60s and '70s, financiers, entrepreneurs, and constructors emerged from nowhere. In short, this was the time for people like Sindona and Berlusconi.

Not just Sicilian

Mafia in Italy does not mean only *Cosa Nostra*. In the '50s and '60s we see other criminal societies emerging, such as the Calabrese *Ndrangheta* and the Neapolitan *Camorra*. But these mafias should not be understood separately from *Cosa Nostra*. They already existed from the second half of the 19th century, but they too now follow the Sicilian-American model and have become modern. Even though those three mafias are fairly independent from one another, they are still interconnected.

If we analyse the last 30 years we can see three main transformations in the mafia world: the decline of the Sicilian mafia in favour of the Calabrian *Ndrangheta*; the capillary expansion of the mafia into the North of Italy; the infiltration into the State apparatus -- the Anti-State that becomes the State.

The myth that the mafia is a problem only in the South of Italy is indeed a myth. Mafias expanded systematically thanks also to the forced exile of convicted Mafiosi to the northern regions of the country, such as Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia Romagna, Liguria. This showed the poor understanding of lawmakers of the mafia phenomenon. The mafia no longer depended on the control of the poor rural territory of the South. The mafia was a form of violent and rule-less entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. The North was an ideal virgin land for them. The *Ndrangheta*, in particular, was very effective in this expansion, because unlike *Cosa Nostra*, it clones itself, looking for the same basic criminal

structures as the original. For example, Lombardy is also the name of the criminal organization bound to *Ndrangheta*, which has the same rites, language, customs, structure and hierarchal order as the Calabrian *Ndrangheta* (*Atlante delle mafie*. Storia, economia, società, cultura, a cura di Enzo Ciconte, Francesco Forgione e Isaia Sales, Vol II).

evolved from the criminal point of view, in its ambitions, projects of control of the entrepreneurial and economic activities; broadening its relationships with public officials and public security and becoming attractive partners to earn votes in the elections. *Ndrangheta* is now present on the five continents, in particular in Canada, USA, Colombia, Australia, Switzerland, and Germany. Today *Ndrangheta* is the world leader of cocaine trafficking.

We can now see why the Italian ruling class got so entangled with organized crime. It has always been and on several occasions has made political use of organized crime to accomplish its own aims. The mafia changed itself and became an integral part of the State. It is clear that the mafia is a criminal organization that today has only one interest, profit.

So the question arises: What is the actual difference between the lobby system and the mafia system? It is the code of written and non-written laws, but these two systems have the same aim. Both are based upon exploiting non-paid work. Both systems make use of force. The mafia system, on the one hand, is less predictable, but, on the other hand, it still needs the *benepiacito* agreement of the bourgeois State, which has a repressive capacity hugely bigger than the mafia itself.

Finally, will the 'legal' bourgeoisie be able to defeat the mafia or will it accept it as an expression of itself? The problem is not only a moral one but also an economic one. At the moment the 'legal' bourgeoisie has used or has collaborated with the mafia, allowing the mafia to grow and to become competitive even in the 'clean' sectors. Since the bourgeois State has in principle the tools to annihilate the mafia, but so far has not done it, this suggests that it does not want to; but on the contrary, that it wants to make use of it.

Nowadays, the mafia has infiltrated the structure of control of bourgeois power, so things have become rather complicated. A pure repressive action may no longer be sufficient. It is a bit like the situation that the fascist regime had to face. In Italy, as well as in other countries, destroying the mafia means also amputating a part of the bourgeois State itself. The mafias have worsened workers' quality of life and even working conditions, and the bourgeoisie did not, and does not, hesitate to make use of it to exploit or repress worker and radical movements. Therefore, the struggle against capital means also struggle against one of its peculiar expressions, which is the mafia, regardless of the ruling class's moral crisis.

CESCO

In the North the mafia, and in particular *Ndrangheta*, has



Housing: the market doesn't work

The housing crisis is a messy combination of high demand for homes from people, a shortage of new houses being built, and an insufficient amount of affordable or social housing. This wide gap between what's needed and what's available shows that the housing market doesn't work.

Houses are built to make money for developers and landowners, not because people need them. Developers aim to maximise their profits by building the kind of housing which is likely to bring in the best returns. This will tend to be houses for private sale. Social housing managed by councils and housing associations is a less attractive investment. As a result, the few homes which are being built will only be affordable to a few people. The housing shortage actually benefits the economy, in a weird way. Because demand for new houses is high, some people are prepared to pay a lot, so developers can get away with charging higher prices for new homes. Consequently, house prices have rocketed, and developers and mortgage lenders have raked in the profits.

Thousands of people locally on medium and lower incomes have been priced out of the market, and end up unable to move to better housing. Those with lower

incomes, or who have debts, have to rely on the often-unreliable end of the private sector or under-funded social housing. For homeless people, any type of long-term housing might be hard to find. The housing market shows how the system doesn't work in our interests.

Reforms have to fit in with how the system runs. Any changes to legislation or reallocation of public funds only last as long as they're financially viable. Tinkering with the system hasn't made it work in the interests of the vast majority. So, the economic and political system itself needs to be changed. We need to go from a society where land and resources are owned by a tiny minority to one where they are owned by everyone in common. Houses would be built, goods would be produced and services would be run directly because people need and want them. The financial market would no longer be there, rationing and restricting who gets what. Work would be co-operative and voluntary, without the stresses which come from struggling without enough resources or staff. The only way such a society could be organised is democratically, without leaders. And the only way that society could be reached is democratically, if the majority worldwide wanted it and worked for it.

MF





The market didn't always exist

The Inca Empire lasted a couple of a hundred years and according to Terence D'Altroy of Columbia University, in a 2007 PBS interview, 'In terms of square miles, we're probably talking something like 300,000 square miles' with a population as high as 12 million. They built elaborate cities and created terraced farms on the mountainsides, all connected by a road network equivalent to about three times the diameter of the Earth and far superior to what the Conquistadors were accustomed to back in Europe. And all this was achieved without money or internal markets.

In *The Incas: New Perspectives*, Gordon Francis McEwan writes: 'Each citizen of the empire was issued the necessities of life out of the state storehouses, including food, tools, raw materials, and clothing, and needed to purchase nothing. With no shops or markets, there was no need for a standard currency or

money, and there was nowhere to spend money or purchase or trade for necessities.'

The Incas had a centrally-planned economy which lasted a lot longer than the Soviet Union's command economy. Every Incan was required to provide labour-tribute to the state and in exchange for this labour levy, they were given the necessities of life. However the Inca Empire was not a classless society and not everybody had to perform this compulsory work. Nobles and their courts were exempt, as were other prominent members of Incan society.

The Inca Empire was optimised to prevent starvation rather than to foster commerce and the *ayllu* was the center of economic productivity. Each *ayllu* specialised in the production of certain products depending on its location. For some of them this would be agriculture as they would be closer to fertile lands. Agricultural *ayllus* produced crops that would be optimised for the type

of soil. Their output would be given to the state which in turn would redistribute it to other locations where the product was not available. Surplus would be kept in *collcas*, storage houses along the roads and near population centres. Other *ayllus* would specialise in producing pottery, clothing and virtually anything necessary for everyday living which would be distributed by the state to other *ayllus*.

The use of the land was a right that individuals had as members of the *ayllu*. The *curaca*, as the representative of the *ayllu*, redistributed the land to each member according to the size of their families. The dimensions of the land varied according to its agricultural quality and it was measured in *tupus*, a local measurement unit. A married couple would get one and a half *tupus*, for each male child the couple received one *tupu* and for each female half a *tupu*. When the son or daughter started their own

family each additional tupu was taken away and given to the new family. Each family worked their land but they did not own it, the Inca estate was the rightful owner. The land was used to provide subsistence food for the family.

There were three ways in which collective labour was organised:

The first one was the *ayni* to help a member of the community who was in need. Helping build a house or help a sick member of the community were examples of *ayni*.

The second was the *minka* or team work for the benefit of the whole community. Examples of *minka* were building agricultural terraces and cleaning the irrigation canals.

The third one was the *mita* or the tax paid to the Inca. Mita workers served as soldiers, farmers, messengers, road builders, or whatever needed to be done. It was a rotational and temporary service that each member of the *ayllu* was required to meet. They built temples and palaces, canals for irrigation, agricultural terraces, roads, bridges and tunnels. This system was a balanced system of give and take. In exchange the government would provide food, clothing and medication. This system allowed the empire to have all the necessary produce available for redistribution according to necessity.

Yet whenever members of the Socialist Party suggest that we wish to create a co-operative moneyless society without private property nor a wages system, we are smugly lectured that it is not a viable objective, that it is unrealisable and we are being utopian in our aspirations. Socialist writers have shown that we are products of our environment, particularly of the economic system in which we live. People living under feudalism thought it natural and fixed, just as people living under capitalism believe it too is natural and eternal. If people's ideas and their societies changed in the past they certainly can change again in the future. That is why socialists are given to optimism when we read of non-market economic systems such as the Inca having once existed even though the one we envisage would be classless, non-coercive and democratic.

ALJO

Obituary: Bernard Walker

We regret to have to report that comrade Bernard Walker died on 15 March after a ten-year long, lingering illness. He joined the Party in 1948 after having been one of those seduced in their youth by the Communist Party and its support for the war. After the war he met an SPGB member and learned the reasons for the poverty he had seen and experienced on the one hand, and the immense riches of a handful of exploiters on the other. He grew up in Chorley, Lancashire, and moved to London when he joined the Party and there met his future wife, Joyce. They married in 1953 and in 1960 had a son, Anthony. A member of the old Ealing branch he moved to Bournemouth where he was active in the group there,

From his father Bernard inherited a passion for Percy Bysshe Shelley and working class history, which expanded following his introduction to the Party. He imparted to his own son a love of books and the importance of self-education and of not relying on the state for information. He was also skilful at sketching and at arithmetic, but his socialism was the core of his life and his hope for the future. At Twickenham Bernard became a founder member of the Grasshoppers rugby club, which still exists. He was modest and quiet in company and felt deeply about his convictions. He leaves behind and is loved by his son and his wife.

AKW



Cashless is not moneyless

'WE DON'T NEED CASH. LET'S ABOLISH IT OUTRIGHT' was the perhaps surprising headline of an article in the *Times* (24 March) by Ed Conway, the economics editor of Sky News. His argument was that the continuing use of cash is negating the policy of governments and central banks of trying to control the economy by varying interest rates.

The theory behind this policy is that if interest rates go up people will be encouraged to save, and 'if a recession strikes, down go interest rates, and, in theory, everyone goes out and spends.' Leaving aside the fact that this mistakenly assumes that an economic recovery can be consumer-led whereas it has to be profit-led, interest rates are now so low that this theory, even on its own assumptions, is not working.

As the rise in the general price level has virtually stopped in the Eurozone, and has even fallen, the European Central Bank has resorted to negative interest rates. The rate is now minus 0.2 percent. The aim is still to encourage spending. But it hasn't. What it has done, according to Conway, is encourage people to keep their savings in cash rather than deposit them in a bank. Even banks are not depositing their cash with the Bank of England as they normally do but 'are stacking it away on pallets in warehouses under lock and key.' If you do this you don't get any interest of course, but at least it avoids you having to pay 'negative interest'.

Conway's solution is to abolish cash altogether so as to prevent people and banks doing this with the result that their spending cannot be controlled by the central bank (not that it is anyway). It's not going to happen but, even if it did, the resulting 'cashless' society would not be the 'moneyless' society that socialists have always envisaged.

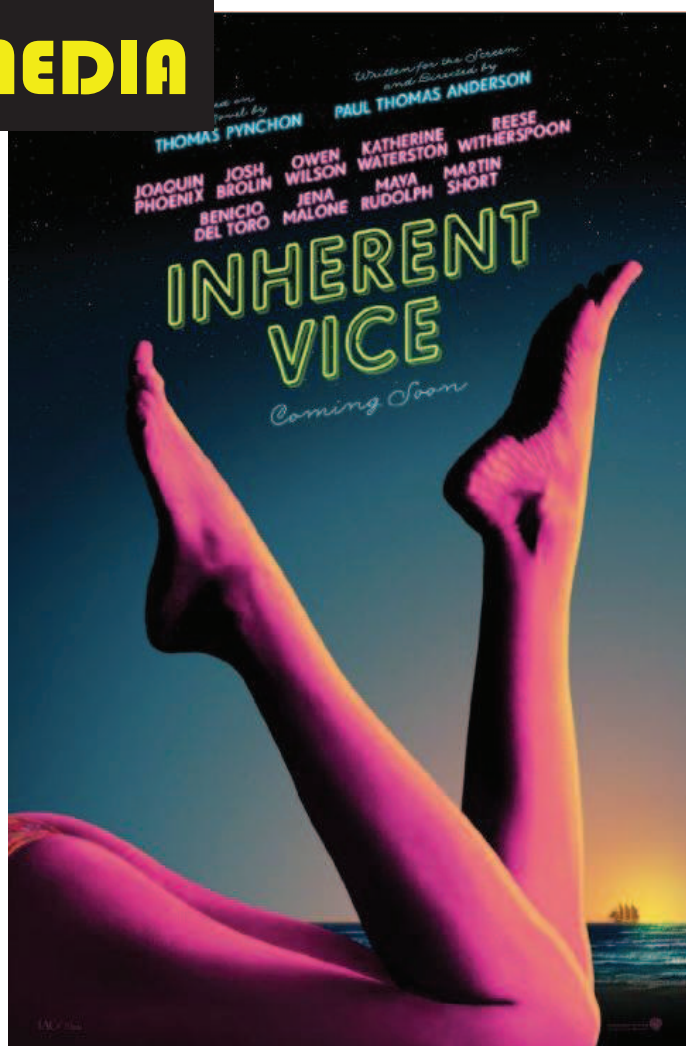
Socialism will be a moneyless society because, both productive resources and products when they are produced being commonly owned, there will be no exchange of goods and services of equal economic value, no buying and selling, only distribution (whether through free distribution or free access). So there would be no need of money as a means of exchange, money's primary function.

A cashless society would still have an exchange economy, the difference being that the means of exchange would no longer include notes and coins, only electronic transfers. In fact this is already how most exchange transactions are done. Capitalist firms and banks have long since abandoned transferring wads of notes to make a payment or a loan. And individuals are using electronic payments more and more. As Conway notes:

'The majority of our day-to-day transactions now take place using credit cards, contactless payment and charge cards (such as Oyster cards). Internet banking means you can transfer money to someone in a few clicks.'

Notes and coins are not in themselves money, but only tokens for it. There is no reason in principle why they couldn't be replaced by something else – by, precisely, digits on a computer. These too are still tokens for money because the purchasing power they represent circulates. If, like store cards, they were cancelled on use, they wouldn't be money-tokens but this is not what happens. They are transferred from owner to owner just as cash is and are just as much 'currency'.

Socialism will involve the disappearance not just of notes and coins but also of these other, electronic tokens for money as a means of exchange and payment. It will be a 'plastic-less' society too.



Inherent Vice

THE 2014 film *Inherent Vice* is a sunlit noir Counter-Culture mystery written and directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, based on the 2009 novel by Thomas Pynchon. Joaquin Phoenix is stoner sleuth Doc Sportello in Los Angeles in the Spring of 1970, the era of Timothy Leary when the doors of perception were wide open. The film is in the tradition of LA-set detective films where a man finds himself in a mystery he cannot comprehend or solve such as Polanski's *Chinatown*, Altman's *The Long Goodbye*, and Penn's *Night Moves*, although Anderson said 'Hawks's *The Big Sleep* is impossible to follow, but it doesn't matter, you just want to keep watching it, seeing where it goes, that's what I wanted from *Inherent Vice*.'

The film's title refers to a property in a physical object that causes it to deteriorate due to the fundamental instability of its components, making an item an unacceptable risk to a carrier or insurer. Churchill once said that 'the inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings.'

Inherent Vice concerns property developer Mickey Wolfmann, who under the influence of LSD tries to go back on his capitalist ways: 'I spent my whole life making people pay for shelter, when I didn't realise it should've been for free.'

The blissed-out gumshoe visits a private 'sanatorium' and Pynchon refers to California Governor Reagan's 'privatisation' programme which involved the closing of state mental hospitals. Dr E Fuller Torrey in *American Psychosis: How the Federal Government Destroyed the Mental Illness Treatment System* writes that Reagan associated psychiatry with Communism, and 'California

became the national leader in aggressively moving patients from state hospitals to board-and-care homes.' Board-and-care homes became big business in California, and owners had financial ties with Governor Reagan. He was emptying state hospitals, and capitalist firms were profiting from it. Homelessness and criminalisation resulted, and homicides committed by mentally ill individuals who were not being treated.

Richard Nixon was in the White House, and the US government began the 'War on Drugs' with *Operation Intercept* to halt the flow of marijuana from Mexico, and the LAPD engaged itself in 'a long and busy day of civil rights violations' (Anderson). John Higgs wrote that 'the Counter-Culture was battered by the constant repression of the Nixon government.'

In anticipation of the 1970 California gubernatorial election, LSD proselytiser Dr Timothy Leary announced his candidacy for governor with the motto 'Come Together – Join the Party.' Leary said 'I'm going to legalise marijuana...(and) eliminate money from Californian society and return to a barter system' (*Montreal Gazette* 31 May 1969). According to John Higgs in *I Have America Surrounded*, Leary promoted 'extreme libertarian free-market ideals and utopian hippy fantasies.' Higgs points out that 'the idea of 'freak power', utilising the usually apathetic hippy mass as a democratic power base, had not been tested, but there were signs that it could emerge as a genuine phenomenon' which were seen in the Aspen Sheriff election when Hunter S Thompson stood as the 'Freak Power' candidate and narrowly lost. Nixon said 'Timothy Leary is the most dangerous man in America', and Leary's campaign came to an end in January 1970 when he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

The shadow of the Charlie Manson Family murders hovers over the film, the trial began in LA in June 1970. *Inherent Vice* portrays LA as pervaded by paranoia where 'every gathering of three or more civilians is now defined as a potential cult', and one character asks 'What would Charlie do?' 'Groucho Marxist' Jerry Rubin said he fell in love with Manson's 'cherub face and sparkling eyes', Bernadine Dohrn of left wing guerilla group Weather Underground declared 'Dig it! Offing those rich pigs with their own forks and knives, far out! The Weathermen dig Charles Manson', while Underground paper *Tuesday's Child* had a front page picture of Manson naming him 'Man of the Year.' Hunter S Thompson wrote 'bad craziness' was taking over.

In *Inherent Vice* the spectre of the schooner *Golden Fang* is a personification of 'The Man', which could be an Indo-Chinese heroin cartel, and symbolises the global narcotics trade as the invisible hand of unfettered, rapacious capitalism. Pynchon marks 1970 LA as the moment America let capitalism fly off the leash. In 1971 the cancellation of the direct convertibility of the US dollar to gold was replaced by freely floating fiat currencies which made 'Globalisation' easier through the free movement of capital around the world.

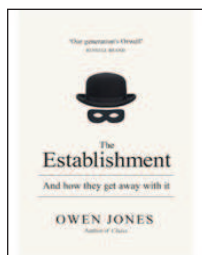
Even USA 'Founding Father' Thomas Jefferson speaks from the obverse of a nickel coin in *Inherent Vice*: 'the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants', although his statements that people needed to be vigilant against any law that 'violates the rights of the individual' and 'that government is best which governs least' are more suited to the Counter-Culture.

The epigraph to *Inherent Vice* is 'Sous les pavés, la plage!' ('Under the paving stones, the beach!') from 'Les événements' of Paris 1968, to which should be added 'Soyez réalistes, demandez l'impossible' ('Be Realistic, Demand the Impossible').

STEVE CLAYTON

Disestablishment

***The Establishment: and How They Get Away With It.* By Owen Jones. Penguin £8.99.**



The Establishment, according to Owen Jones, consists of politicians, media barons, businesses, financiers and the police. They 'manage' democracy to

ensure that it does not damage their interests. The Conservatives are its most natural political representatives, and the Labour Party in effect accepts the Tories' main ideas. The Establishment shares mentalities but is not any kind of organised conspiracy. Its basic ideology is that of free markets and neo-liberalism, yet it is in fact completely dependent on the state.

Jones provides myriad examples of the connections among the different members of the Establishment. The mainstream media, for instance, are controlled by a small group of very powerful individuals, and the press and TV provide consistently misleading coverage, which often leads to people having absurdly exaggerated ideas about, say, the extent of social security fraud. Slightly awkward MPs such as Tom Watson and Chris Bryant have been subject to nasty personal attacks and may be put under covert surveillance. The BBC too is 'a mouthpiece for the Establishment', presenting the free-market view as an apolitical stance.

While benefit claimants are attacked in the press and people who are seriously ill are assessed by the likes of Atos as capable of working, there is a whole industry devoted to reducing the tax paid by the rich and the companies they own. Big accountancy firms such as Ernst & Young help design laws on tax avoidance and then advise clients on how to get round them. They have played a part in the increased concentration of wealth at the very top of the social pyramid.

The police, however, occupy a somewhat precarious place in the Establishment. They were needed to defeat the unions in the 1980s, especially the Miners' Strike, and Thatcher's government gave them a big pay rise. The police PR machine became very friendly with newspaper editors. But, with the Establishment now feeling more firmly in control, the police themselves have been subject to cuts and privatisation: in

November 2012 thousands of police officers marched in London in protest against cuts.

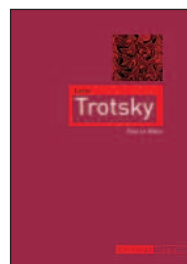
Despite all the propaganda about free markets and freeing society from the dead hand of the state, the Establishment relies on the state machine to defend its interests. This covers not just bank bailouts but also the provision of infrastructure, support for research and development, the protection of property, and subsidies to companies via benefits for the low-paid. Organisations such as the Adam Smith Institute have succeeded in setting the framework for political debate, with anything slightly at odds with their ideas seen as completely beyond the pale. It is really only on the subject of the EU that the Establishment shows a divergence of views.

Jones gives a well-researched guide to all this and much else besides, which makes the milk-and-water nature of his own proposals all the more disappointing. In the foreword he describes the Green Party's policies as 'a genuine assault on the Establishment' and in his conclusion he calls for a 'democratic revolution'. But all this consists of is nationalisation, attacking tax avoidance, increasing the minimum wage and controlling private-sector rents. This might lead to some redistribution of wealth, but it will not truly disturb the status quo.

PB

Hagiography

***Leon Trotsky.* By Paul Le Blanc. Reaktion Books. 2015.**



Yet another hagiography but what's the point? Only Trotskyists are interested in Trotsky these days and they know his life by heart.

Trotsky was a political failure and left a dubious political legacy. Apart from scores of squabbling Trotskyist sects, there's the justification for reformist practice called 'transitional demands'. His *History of the Russian Revolution* is worth a read as written by somehow who played a prominent part in it. As is *The Revolution Betrayed* which, though mistakenly identifying Russia as a 'degenerate workers state' with an economy superior to capitalism because of its nationalisation and planning, at least initiated discussions on 'the nature

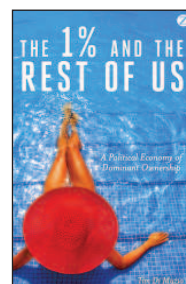
of the USSR' which led to some of his followers realising that it was a class-ruled society and even state capitalism, even if he himself never did.

Le Blanc, a Trotskyist himself, is one of those who have been trying to paint Lenin as an orthodox leftwing Marxist operating in the specific conditions of Tsarist Russia rather than as the originator of a quite different theory and practice, Leninism. He claims the same for Trotsky but says virtually nothing in his book of Trotsky's ideas and activities up to 1917 before he became a Bolshevik and which might have given some plausibility to this view.

ALB

Capital as power

***The 1% and the Rest of us. A Political Economy of Dominant Ownership.* By Tim Di Muzio. Zed Books.**



This is a curate's egg. The historical parts are good as is the definition of 'the 1%' as the dominant owners of income-yielding assets. Even 'capital as power', as an alternative to the concepts of capital as

physical instruments of production (orthodox economics) and of capital as accumulated surplus value (Marx), has some descriptive merit. Capitalist firms can be seen as trying 'to redistribute more money to themselves than their counterparts, who are trying to do the same thing.' Which means that all capitalist firms are in effect competing against each other for profits not against just those in the same branch of activity.

But the bad part is really bad. Di Muzio has swallowed hook, line and sinker the view that banks literally create money 'out of thin air', a phrase he repeatedly uses. We are asked to believe that, when banks make a loan it is not out of money they have or can acquire, they just create it out of nothing and then charge interest on it. He offers this as an explanation as to why prices keep rising since, according to him, when

SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2014

For a copy send 2 second-class stamps to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN

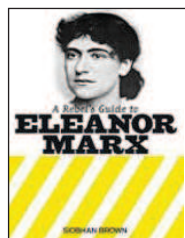
a business has taken out a loan from a bank it has to increase the price of what it is selling to cover the interest it has to pay the bank. He also thinks that because 'there is not enough money in the economy for workers to purchase goods and services they produce, there is a constant demand for interest-bearing credit'. But, as we always point out when confronted with such 'underconsumptionist' views, what the workers can't buy the capitalists can or could.

This is the purest currency crankism in its crudest form, which not even Positive Money (who he mentions favourably) subscribes to. He even proudly boasts that this is what he teaches his students at the University of Wollongong in Australia who start their course thinking (correctly, in fact) that banks can't lend more than they have or can acquire. His only saving grace on this is a passage in which he writes that 'it is unclear whether Marx understood' that banks create money out of thin air. Well, for the record, Marx did not make that mistake. Logically with his views, Di Muzio lists as the most important demand that 'the party of the 99%' he envisages (not a bad idea in itself) is 'monetary reform' to replace 'money as debt' by a government bank simply printing money as 'democratically decided' is needed. An unnecessary and worthless reform as well as a harmful diversion from what such a party should really aim at: the expropriation of the 1% and the rest of the owning class by making the Earth's resources the common heritage of all humanity.

ALB

Socialist and trade unionist

***A Rebel's Guide to Eleanor Marx.*
By Siobhan Brown. Bookmarks.
2015.**



Although marred by the littering of 'fightbacks' and 'downturns' characteristic of SWP publications, this is not fundamentally a bad booklet. The

contribution of Eleanor Marx to the class struggle is satisfactorily documented, both intellectually through her work on women – identifying socialism as the way to 'woman's emancipation' solution – and practically through her role as a firebrand activist in the New Unionism of the 1880s. Eleanor was not just the daughter of her father but a player in her own right – indeed her union interventions put his own ineffective fumbblings in the First International to shame. The boring intricacies of her personal life are, in the main, sensibly avoided. Little potted biographies of this nature have a valuable educative function regardless of the dubious politics of the issuing organisation. It is a little jarring, however, to be lectured on the undoubted usefulness of trade union organisation, the inefficacy of reformism and the patronising leadership attitude (of Hyndman) by a party characterised by non-industrial, primarily student,

recruitment, hugely reformist sensibilities and a thoroughly authoritarian constitution. In the wake of the Comrade Delta scandal, perhaps the most notable thing about the 'Rebel's Guide' series is the attention paid to 'The Woman Question'. Four of the six in the range have female authors and half are about famous women or women's issues. Whether there really was any truth behind the allegations or no, there is nothing like putting up a smoke screen.

KAZ



Puppets and Politics

THE RUN-UP to a general election is as good a time as any to launch a puppet-based satirical sketch show. Featuring

caricatures of politicians, royalty and celebs, *Newzoids* (ITV) inevitably draws comparisons with *Spitting Image*, which set the template back in the '80s. Some sketches are made only a day or so before broadcast, so the show reflects what's in the news, hence its title.

Newzoids has inherited its predecessor's puerile tastelessness, but sadly the puppets are less detailed and expressive, even with the addition of CGI mouths. Technology has moved on since *Spitting Image*'s day, so these puppets have been computer-designed and 3D-printed. Caricatures are more effective – and funnier – the more exaggerated they are, and *Newzoids*' puppets don't quite go far enough.



The same can be said for the programme's sketches, which don't always make the most of their set-ups. So, *Newzoids* might take a while to find its own voice and style; it took *Spitting Image* a few years to establish itself as one of those programmes which gets talked about the following morning. Memorable skits from the first episode include David Cameron being carried in a sedan chair to a drive-thru burger bar, and Ed Miliband as a dim-witted and goofy contestant on 'I'm A Catastrophe, Get Me Out Of

Here'. Nigel Farage is turned into a downmarket stand-up comic with a routine of 'plain old patriotic foreigner-bashing', while Clegg and Cameron become a dysfunctional couple picked apart by Jeremy Kyle. Lampooning our leaders – and wannabe leaders – should make us question why we expect them to represent us or have our best interests at heart. Sending something up is supposed to undermine confidence in it, so satire has a useful role in highlighting society's shaky beliefs, such as faith in leaders.

MIKE FOSTER

from page 5

and services would be run directly for anyone who wants them, without the dictates of the economic market. Industries and services would be run just to satisfy people's needs and wants. Our natural resources could be managed in a sustainable way, as the waste and short-term profitability which lead to environmental damage wouldn't be there.

All this could only be achieved by fundamentally changing the way society is organised. As every country is part of a global economy, the vast majority of people worldwide would need to want to change society. The only legitimate and practical way this could be happen is by organising equally and democratically. This means voluntary, co-operative, creative work, with decisions and responsibilities agreed through everyone having an equal say. This would mean a much broader and more inclusive use of democracy than we're used to. The Socialist Party is using what limited democracy we have in our current society to advocate a better world for everyone.

MIKE FOSTER



Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

Saturday 2 May, 1.00pm to 5.00pm
Glasgow Branch Day School
'The General Election: More Worthless Promises'
Hillhead Library,
348 Byres Road, Glasgow G12 8AP

Saturday 9 May, 2.00pm to 5.00pm
East Anglia Regional Branch
'Democracy'
Speaker: Richard Headicar
The Reindeer Pub,
10 Dereham Road, Norwich NR2 4AY

Sunday 17 May, 3.00pm
Socialist Party Head Office
'Democracy: What It Is and What It Aint'
Speaker: Richard Headicar
52 Clapham High Street,
London SW4 7UN

Tuesday 19 May, 8.00pm
West London Branch
'The General Election Result: What Next?'
Speaker: Adam Buick
Chiswick Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JN

Sunday 31 May, 3.00pm
Socialist Party Head Office
'Socialism and Sudoku'
Speaker: Bill Martin
52 Clapham High Street,
London SW4 7UN

Sunday 21 June, 3.00pm
Socialist Party Head Office
'The New Dust Bowl: Soil and Survival'
Speaker: Gwynn Thomas
52 Clapham High Street,
London SW4 7UN

Also

Saturday 2 May, From 12 Noon
Vauxhall Election Stall
Outside 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN

Saturday 2 May, From 12 Noon
Canterbury Election Stall
The Parade, Canterbury CT1 2JL



Picture Credits

Cover: Inca city: © 2009 Martin St-Amant (S23678) Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

p8: California dry lake, 2014, Maryphillips1952, CCA-SA 4.0

p11: First aider in parade © Stuart Grout - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/CC BY 2.0>

p12: White Rose, 2009, Magnus Manske, CC BY 2.0

p13-15: Mafia map, 2010, Citypeek, CC BY-SA 3.0; Piazza della memoria, 2008, Dedda71, CC BY-SA 3.0; Solarino, 2008, Azotoliquido, PD

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as

a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of

the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

50 Years Ago

Housing in London

THE ROOT cause of the housing problem in big cities like London is the capitalist system under which housing accommodation is bought and sold. For many years now the housing market has been subject to various controls but neither these, nor council houses, nor subsidies, alter the basic characteristic of housing under capitalism.



Once a city is established as such, the economics of capitalism ensure that the growth of demand for workers assumes a momentum of its own, for the great concentration of people in a city provides a vast market for so-called consumer goods and services. Even in times of depression the drift to the cities continues. But it is in times of full employment that the housing problem becomes acute because in such conditions the rate of growth of employment usually exceeds the rate of growth of housing. Inevitably this creates problems. This basically is what is happening in London today. As the Milner Holland Report puts it:

'If the growth of housing does not match the growth of employment there will be trouble of some kind.' (...)

Overcrowding, high rents, homelessness intimidation and the other ills from which many workers suffer are a direct result of the fact that demand for accommodation exceeds the supply. In large cities like London this must happen and is likely to be permanent. The Report itself says as much: 'the housing problems confronting great cities ... are of a long term if not permanent character'. The Report also, very appropriately, draws attention to the fact that this problem is not new. They quote from a similar report made by Charles Booth in 1901. Of course since then some housing conditions have improved in many respects but as the Report points out the problem 'remains fundamentally the same.'

(from article by A.L.B., *Socialist Standard*, May 1965)

ACTION REPLAY

What price the Qatar 2022 Football World?

QATAR WILL host the 2022 World Cup, the first Arab nation to do so. Sepp Blatter, the FIFA president has already endorsed the bid and said 'The Arabic world deserves to hold a world cup competition'. Qatar enjoys the support of the Arab league and the event is intended to bridge the gap between the Arab World and the West.

The first five proposed stadiums were unveiled in March 2010. The stadiums will employ cooling technology capable of reducing temperatures within the stadium by up to 20C. All of the five stadium projects launched have been designed by German architect Albert Speer and Partners. The air conditioning in the stadiums for the players and the spectators will be solar powered, carbon neutral and provided by Arup of England. The technology employed is remarkable but the labour required for its installation and the building of the stadiums has caused many deaths to migrant workers. Most of the workers are living in labour camps, enduring squalid conditions.

A *Guardian* article (25 September

2013) reported that a number of Nepalese migrant workers have faced poor conditions, as companies handling construction work for the 2022 World Cup infrastructure forced them to stay by denying them promised salaries and withholding necessary worker ID permits, making them illegal aliens. The precarious situation the various employers have created have forced the migrant workers to beg for food. Thousands of Nepalese labourers in Qatar face exploitation and abuses that amount to modern-day slavery as defined by the ILO.

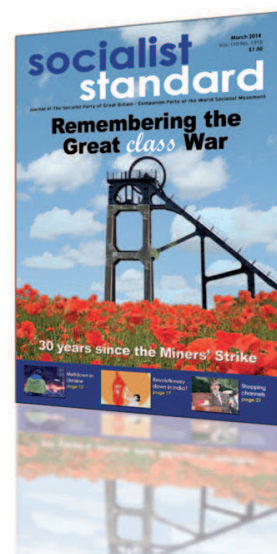
During a building binge to pave the way for the Football competition in 2022, Nepalese workers in Qatar have been dying at a rate of one per day. A report released in March 2014 by the International Trade Union Confederation estimated that 4,000 more workers could die as preparations for the World Cup continue.

The barbaric conditions that migrant workers endure, brings sharply into focus, that under capitalism, capital is considered more important than labour. The profits that will flow to the companies involved in the Qatar World Cup, when the games commence, are considered more important than ensuring that proper safety conditions prevail to protect the migrant workers.

KEVIN

FREE

3-month trial subscription to the *Socialist Standard*



For more details about The Socialist Party, or to request a 3-month trial subscription to the *Socialist Standard*, please complete and return this form to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.**

☐ Please send me an info pack

☐ Please send me a trial subscription to the *Socialist Standard*.

Name.....

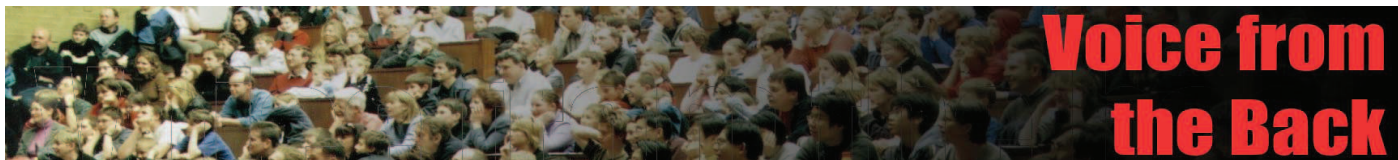
Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....



Voice from the Back

Imagine no countries

'Nigeria is an entirely artificial, colonial construct created by the British Empire (and bounded by the French Empire). Its boundaries bear no relation to internal national entities, and it is huge. The strange thing is that these totally artificial colonial constructs of states generate a genuine and fierce patriotism among their citizens....' (ICH, 14 March) Socialists can agree with former 'British' Ambassador Craig Murray here, adding that workers have no country. There will be none in a socialist world, nor barriers such the one described here: 'Less than two decades after the painstaking removal of a massive border fence designed to keep people in, Bulgarian authorities are just as painstakingly building a new fence along the rugged Turkish border, this time to keep people out' (*New York Times*, 5 April).

Nothing to kill or die for

'Pope Francis has recently pushed the moral argument against nuclear weapons to a new level, not only against their use but also against their possession,' Archbishop Bernedito Auza, the Holy See's Ambassador to the U.N., says. 'Today there is no more argument, not even the argument of deterrence used during the Cold War, that could 'minimally morally justify' the possession of nuclear weapons. The 'peace of a sort' that is supposed to justify nuclear deterrence is specious and illusory' (*Time*, April 10). CND, better known to socialists as the Campaign for Conventional Warfare, has a new potential recruit! Peace will only have a genuine chance when the majority of us come to understand and desire socialism.

No religion too

Marx wrote 'the tradition of all past generations weighs like an incubus upon the brain of the living'. And it is only when capitalism is cast into the dustbin of pre-history, will countless abominations, such as the one described here, come to an end: 'Known only by the name

Gulnaz, the woman was just 16 years old when she fell pregnant with the child of her depraved attacker Asadullah - who is also married to her cousin. Rejected by her family and sentenced to 12 years in a Kabul prison for 'adultery by force', Gulnaz's only hope of a reduced sentence was to marry Asadullah. Now she is pregnant with his third child but told CNN she only agreed to marry her rapist so that her first daughter - named Smile could live a shame-free life in the Afghan capital's 'traditional' society' (*Daily Mail*, 8 April).

King Jacob?

The Zulu monarchy is set to issue six new Mercedes Benz E-Class sedans, collectively worth nearly R5 million, to the King's six wives, the *Sunday Tribune* reported. A seventh luxury German sedan has reportedly been purchased and will be kept as a 'back-up'. King Goodwill Zwelithini's household is supported by the provincial government, with an annual pay-in of nearly R60 million (*news24*, 5 April). A storm is brewing over the acquisition of new VIP jets for President Jacob Zuma and his Cabinet at a cost of R2 billion, just after Finance Minister Nhlanhla Nene announced revised spending plans to reduce waste (*news24*, 5 April). The poor continue to exchange one master for another and they both conform to the stereotypes of capitalism. We own; you do not. We control; you do not. We live in luxury; you live in poverty. Nothing changes; everything stays the same.



DIY dentistry

People are said to be turning to dentistry kits, which can be bought in pound shops, due to the cost of NHS dental treatment, where the price of a filling in England can be more than £50 (*Daily Mail*, 4 April).



Victorian values

Some children are experiencing 'Victorian' levels of poverty, often turning up to school sick because their parents cannot afford to take time off to care for them, teachers have claimed. School staff are also still seeing youngsters arriving for lessons hungry, tired and wearing inappropriate clothes due to a continuing squeeze on family finances, according to the NASUWT teaching union. It warned that the lives of many children and young people are being 'blighted and degraded by poverty and homelessness'. In some cases, teachers reported being aware of pupils living in 'Victorian conditions', of youngsters coming to school with no socks or coat and of more families depending on food banks. A survey commissioned by NASUWT found that almost seven in 10 of teachers said they have seen pupils coming to school hungry, while eight in 10 have witnessed youngsters turning up in clothes that are inappropriate for the weather and similar proportions reported children arriving in unwashed or damaged and frayed clothing (*Daily Mirror*, 5 April). 'The promise that all children globally would have primary education by 2015 - pledged by world leaders in the millennium year - has officially not been achieved. Unesco says there are 58 million children without access to primary school and 100 million who do not complete a primary education' (BBC, 9 April). So many lies! But that is what you have to expect when riding the reformist misery-go-round!

FREE LUNCH

